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PLAIN WORDS FROM AMERICA

A LETTER TO A GERMAN PROFESSOR

BY

Professor DOUGLAS W. JOHNSON

Columbia University, New York

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

The following letter, written by Professor Douglas W. Johnson, of Columbia University, is in reply to a letter, pleading the cause of Germany, which he received from a German correspondent. Professor Johnson's letter appeared in the "Revue de Paris" of September, 1916.

PLAIN WORDS FROM AMERICA.

February, 1916.

Your two letters, with enclosed newspaper clippings, and your postal card were duly received. I can assure you that my failure to reply more promptly was not meant as any discourtesy. The clippings were gladly received, for I am always anxious to read what prominent Germans regard as able and convincing presentations of their side of disputed matters. Your own letters, particularly the long one of July 9, were read most carefully. I appreciate your earnest endeavour to convince me of the righteousness of your country's cause, and am not unmindful of the time and trouble you spent in preparing for me so carefully worded a presentation of the German point of view touching several matters of the profoundest importance to our two Governments.

My failure to reply has been due to a doubt in my own mind as to whether good would be accomplished by any letter which I could write. I could not agree with your opinions regarding Germany's responsibility for the war, nor regarding her methods of conducting the war; and it did not seem to me that you would profit by any statement I might make as to the reasons for my own opinions on such vital matters.

Your letters clearly showed that you wrote under the influence of an intense emotion—an emotion which I can both understand and respect, but which might well make it impossible for you to accord a dispassionate reception to a reply which controverted your own views. With your country surrounded by powerful foes, with your sons deluging alien soil in an heroic defence of your Government's decrees, with the nation you love most dearly standing in moral isolation, condemned by the entire neutral world for barbarous crimes against civilisation, you could hardly be expected to write with that scientific accuracy and care which would, in normal times, be your ideal.

For this reason I have not resented much in your letters which would otherwise call for earnest protest. I feel sure, for example, your assertion that I and my fellow-countrymen derive our opinions of German conduct wholly from corrupt and venal newspapers, or usually from a single newspaper which doles out mental poison in subservience to a single political party, was not intended to be as insulting as it really sounded. Your emotion doubtless led you to make charges which your sense of justice and courtesy would, under other circumstances, condemn. I believe also that in a calmer time you would not entertain the sweeping opinion that "the daily press has become one of the direst plagues of humanity, an ulcer in the frame of society, whose one object

it is, for private ends (wealth, political influence, and social position), to pit the races, nations, religions, and classes against one another." I realise that some of our papers are a disgrace to the high calling of journalism ; I believe that some sacrifice honour for gain and that some are subservient to special interests ; but the roll of American journalists is honoured by the presence of many names which command respect at home and abroad because of a long-standing reputation for honesty, fearlessness, and distinguished service in the cause of humanity. To one such name was added at our last commencement the degree representing one of the highest honours which Columbia University has to bestow upon a man of lofty ideals and honourable achievement. The paper edited by this man is among those most extensively read by myself and hundreds of thousands of other Americans who demand to know the truth. However low may be the moral plane of some newspapers, your characterisation of all newspapers as mere business concerns, founded and carried on with the purpose of enriching their owners, and supporting certain special interests, " quite regardless of their effect, beneficial or the reverse, upon the real public interests of their own country, regardless of truth and justice," is not at all true of the class of papers read by the majority of intelligent Americans. I am not sufficiently familiar with a large number of German newspapers to make

assertions as to their standards ; but, in spite of the smaller amount of freedom allowed to the press in your country, I can scarcely imagine that conditions are bad enough to justify your sweeping condemnation of all newspapers.

If you had stopped to consider the radically different relations existing between the press and the Government in Germany and in America, you would scarcely have fallen into the error of asserting that a considerable proportion of our papers, in common with those of other nations, have " laboured in the employ or at the instigation of " the Government, " with all the implements of mendacity and defamation, to spread hatred and contempt for Germany." Unlike your own, our press is wholly free from Government control. Any attempt on the part of our Government to dictate the policy of any newspaper would be hotly resented, and would be doomed to certain failure. Americans do not believe in the German doctrine that the press must be " so far controlled as is requisite for the welfare of the community," and hold that absolute freedom of speech is essential to true liberty. There is no censorship of the American press. You have a censorship which all the outside world knows has been wonderfully effective in keeping some important facts from the knowledge of the German people. No American paper can be suppressed because of what it prints. You are, of course, well aware that, on more than

one occasion, German papers have been suppressed for certain periods because your Government did not believe that what they said was for the good of the country. I enclose a message received by wireless under German control which is only one of the many announcements telling of suppression of your papers. It does not alter the situation to say that censorship and suppression are necessary for the good of the Fatherland, and that the papers in question deserved to be suppressed. The vital fact remains that your newspapers are not free to publish anything they like. Ours are thus free. Every issue of your papers must be submitted to your police, so that your rulers may control what you write and read. Not a paper in America is submitted to any official whatever. You cannot read anything which your Government believes it wise to keep from you. We can read everything, whether the Government likes it or not. Americans believe there can be no truly free press, and no real unfettered public opinion, with the possibility of punishment hanging over the press of a country. Where the police, representing the ruling power, controls the press there is no true liberty. Whatever else may be said against the American press, it must be admitted that it is free from Government control. It is not necessary, therefore, to inquire whether the American Government has employed or instigated the public press to attack Germany,

since, even if it desired to do so, it would not dare make the attempt.

There are many other statements in your letters which can only be explained as the result of writing under stress of intense emotion; you would probably wish to modify many of these were you writing under happier circumstances. It is not my desire, however, to dwell upon this phase of your correspondence. I do not for a moment doubt your sincerity, and believe you were yourself convinced of the truth of all you wrote. My purpose in writing this letter is to accept in good faith your expressed wish for a better understanding between two peoples who have long been on friendly terms with one another, and to contribute toward this end by removing, at least so far as we two are concerned, one serious misunderstanding which now exists.

As you are well aware, the American people, with the exception of a certain proportion of German-born population, are practically unanimous in condemning Germany for bringing on the war and for conducting it in a barbarous manner. You, together with hosts of your fellow-countrymen, believe this unfavourable opinion is the result of the truth being kept from the American public by improper means. It is, of course, a comforting thought to you that when the whole truth is known we will revise our opinions and realise that Germany acted righteously, and was not guilty of the

crimes which have been charged against her. But, as a scientific man, devoted to the search for truth, no matter where it leads you, you would not want to deceive yourself with such a comforting assurance if it were founded on false premises. If, therefore, you really want to know the conditions under which American opinion of Germany's conduct has been formed, I will endeavour to describe them with the same calmness and careful attention to accuracy which I earnestly endeavour to observe in my scientific investigations. In discussing this vitally important matter, I will first endeavour to picture the American opinion of Germany and the Germans before the war, since this was the background upon which later opinions were formed. I will then explain the sources of information which were open to Americans after the war began; and will next describe how this information produced an American opinion unfavourable to Germany, as observed by one who has read widely and watched the trend of his country's thought with keen interest. If this analysis is successful in convincing you that American opinion does not rest on English lies, is not the result of a venal press controlled by British gold, but has a far more substantial foundation, then my letter will not have been written in vain. If you are not convinced, but prefer to retain the comforting belief that if America only knew the truth it would applaud Germany's actions,

then I shall, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that I earnestly endeavoured, in good faith, to return the courtesy which you showed me when you wrote so fully, by telling you with equal fulness the truth as I see it.

I.

First, then, let me picture the background of public opinion toward Germany and the Germans as I saw it before the war began. Inasmuch as one's vision may be affected favourably or unfavourably by his personal experiences, it is only fair that I state briefly my own experiences with people of German birth or parentage. One of my earliest recollections is of a German maid in our household who taught me to make my wants known in the German language, and also taught me to love her as I did members of my own family. In college, one of my two favourite professors and one of my college chums were of German parentage. Both these men are still valued friends, and both believe in the righteousness of Germany's cause. I have spent parts of three summers in Germany, and have many German friends, both in America and in Europe. The two Europeans in my special field of science for whom I have the greatest personal affection are German professors in Berlin and Leipzig respectively. I have more personal friends in the German army than in the

Allied armies. My sister is married to a professor of German descent and German sympathies. Surely, therefore, if personal relationships prejudice me at all, they should prejudice me in favour of Germans and things German.

In my opinion, the American estimate of Germany and her citizens prior to the war was, in general, most favourable. Certainly America looked with admiration upon the remarkable advance achieved by Germany in the short space of forty years. To your universities we have always acknowledged a great debt. We have profited much by your advances in economic lines and admired the combination of scientific research and business which made your countrymen efficient in many lines. The large number of your people who have emigrated to America have, in the main, made good citizens, and we have welcomed them as among the best of the foreigners who flock to our shores. German music and German musicians find nowhere a more cordial welcome than here where admiration for their achievements is unstinted. Nor have we forgotten the heroic services of the many Germans who laid down their lives in defence of our flag, that the Union might live. The Germans' love of honour and family has touched the American heart in a tender spot, and many of my acquaintances admit that with no other foreigners do they establish such intimate and

affectionate relations as with their German friends.

This admiration and friendship has not blinded us to certain defects in the German character, any more than has your friendship for Americans closed your eyes to our defects. The bad manners of Germans are proverbial, not only among Americans, but all over the world ; so much so that certain German writers, admitting that Germans as a nation are ill-mannered, have sought to find in this fact an explanation for the world-wide antagonism toward Germany's policy in the war. I do not believe, however, that, so far as American sentiment is concerned, there is any considerable element of truth in this explanation. It is true that we do not like the lack of respect accorded to women by the average German ; that the position of woman in Germany seems to us anomalous in a nation claiming a superior type of civilisation ; that the bumptious attitude of the German " intellectual " amuses or disgusts us ; and that the insolence of your young officers who elbow us off the sidewalks in your cities makes us long to meet those individuals again outside the boundaries of Germany, where no military Government, jealous of their " honour," could protect them from the thrashing they deserve. It is also true that, at international congresses, excursions and banquets, attended by both men and women representatives of all nations, the Germans

have gained an unenviable reputation for bad manners because they have pushed themselves into the best places, crowded into the trains ahead of the women, and generally ignored the courtesies due to ladies and gentlemen associated with them. But, in spite of our full recognition of this undesirable national trait, I doubt whether any great number of Americans have permitted a dislike of German manners to affect their opinion as to German morals in the conduct of war, though some do hold that lack of good manners is a characteristic mark of inferior civilisation. On the whole, we have been inclined to be tolerant of German rudeness, regarding it as in part due to the rapid material development of a young nation, and possibly as, in part, the result of over-aggressiveness fostered by a military training.

It is only fair to say, also, that our admiration of Germany's achievements in art, literature, and science never led us so far as to accept the claim of superiority in these lines advanced by many Germans on behalf of their country. The insistence with which this claim has been reiterated and proclaimed abroad by Germans, often with more of patriotism than of good taste, may have led a part of the public to believe it. But the more intelligent and thoughtful portion of the people, accustomed to analyse such claims by careful comparison with the products of non-Teutonic civilisation, has been unable to find any

adequate basis for the assumed superiority. Indeed, while intelligent and fair-minded Americans are not slow to recognise Germany's great contributions to the world's art, literature, and science, they believe that, with the possible exception of music, greater contributions have been made in these lines by France, England, and other nations. In the realm of invention, we fully appreciate the skill and resourcefulness manifested by the German people in adapting new discoveries to their own needs; but we cannot deny the fact that most of the discoveries which have played so vital a part in the development of modern civilisation have been made, not in Germany, but in other countries.

In regard to municipal government and various forms of social legislation, we have long recognised the high position held by your nation. But in the more vital matter of the relation of the individual to the supreme governing power, we have always held, and still believe, that Germany is sadly reactionary. For half a century your professors, in the employ of an educational system controlled by a bureaucratic Government, have taught what we condemn as a false philosophy of government. Your histories, your books on philosophy, your whole literature, glorify the *State*; and you have accepted the dangerous doctrine that the individual exists to serve the State, forgetting that the State is not the mystical, divine thing you picture it, but a government

carried on by human beings like yourselves, most of them reasonably upright, but some incompetent and others deliberately bad, just like any other human government. We believe that the only excuse for the existence of the State is to serve the individual, to create conditions which will insure the greatest liberty and highest possible development to the individual citizen. It has never seemed to us creditable to the German intellect that it could be satisfied with a theory of government outgrown by most other civilised nations. That you should confuse efficiency with freedom has always seemed to us a tragic mistake, and never so tragic as now, when a small coterie of human beings, subject to the same mistakes and sins as other human beings, can hurl you into a terrible war before you know what has happened, clap on a rigid censorship to keep out any news they do not want you to learn, then publish a white book which pretends to explain the causes of the war, but omits documents of the most vital importance, thereby causing the people of a confiding nation to drench the earth with their life-blood in the fond illusion that the war was forced upon them, and that they are fighting for a noble cause. Most pitiful is the sad comment of an intelligent German woman in a letter recently received in this country: "We, of course, only see such things as the Government thinks best. We were told that this war was purely a defensive one, forced

upon us. I begin to believe this may not be true, but hope for a favourable ending."

Certainly in what you wrote to me you were thoroughly sincere and honest; yet your letter was full of untrue statements because you were dependent for your information upon a Government-controlled press which has misled you for military and political reasons. How can a nation know the truth, think clearly, and act righteously when a few men, called the "State," can commit you to the most serious enterprise in your history without your previous knowledge or consent, and can then keep you in ignorance of vitally important documents and activities in order to insure your full support of their perilous undertaking? Such is the thought which has always led America to denounce as false the old theory of "divine right of kings," long imposed upon the German people in the more subtle and, therefore, more dangerous form of "the divine right of the State." Our conviction that such a government as yours is reactionary and incompatible with true liberty, and that it stunts and warps the intellects of its citizens, has been amply confirmed by extended observation in your country, and more particularly by the unanswerable fact that millions of your best blood, including distinguished men of intelligence and wealth, have forsaken Germany to seek true liberty of intellect and action in America, renouncing allegiance to the Fatherland to become

citizens here. Some of them still love the scenes of their childhood, but few of them would be willing to return to a life under such a Government as Germany possesses.

To summarise what I said above : Americans, prior to the war, admired the remarkable advances made by Germany in recent years in economic and commercial lines ; held in high regard your universities and many of your university professors ; loved your music, and felt most cordial toward the millions of Germans who came to live among us and share the benefits of our free institutions. The prevalence of bad manners among Germans we regretted, but made allowance for this defect ; and we did not fail to recognise that some Germans are fine gentlemen of the most perfect culture, while most of them have traits of character which we admired.

We recognised the immense value of Germany's contributions to art, literature, and science, but did not consider Germany's contributions in these lines as equal to those of other nations. We never have regarded German culture as superior, but rather as inferior, to that of certain other countries ; and the Germans' loud claims to superiority have seemed to us egotistical and the result of a weak point in the German character. For your form of government and the philosophy of history taught by your university professors we could never have much admiration or respect. Both seemed to us unworthy of an

intelligent, civilised people, and sure to lead to disaster. Your military preparations, evident to every observant visitor, have long caused us to distrust your Government and to consider your country a menace to the world's peace. In a word, we admired and loved your people, although we considered them neither perfect nor even superior to other people; but we disapproved and distrusted your reactionary military Government.

II.

Such was our attitude when the war burst upon the world. Since that time what opportunities have the American people had to form an intelligent opinion as to who was wrong and who was right? What sources of information have been open to us, what means of getting at the facts? Have we been drowned in English lies, as several of your professors have written me is the case? Have we relied on one corrupt party newspaper, as you intimate is our habit? Have we been dependent on a press bought up with English gold, as is continually asserted by the German press?

In the first place, we have relied in part upon our previous knowledge of the German Government and the German people. The hundreds of Americans who have studied in your universities, the thousands who have visited your country, and the millions who have come into close

contact with Germans in this country, all have a pretty good idea of the German type of mind, German standards of national morality, German virtues and defects. Americans have, of course, used this information in reaching a conclusion as to the truth or falsehood of charges against Germany. I talked with some of our American professors just as they landed on the pier in New York fresh from a summer in Germany which was cut short by the outbreak of the war. They came direct from your country and were as fully informed of the German points of view right up to the declaration of war as were any of your citizens. Many Americans who have spent months and even years on German soil, and who know the country and the people intimately, have made us well acquainted with German standards and German methods of thinking.

It is true that since the war began much of our news has come through cables controlled by the Allies; but Americans have too much common sense to accept such reports as final. News from biassed sources is always accepted with reservation, and not fully believed unless confirmed from independent sources. Furthermore, Americans have never lacked for first-hand information from Germany. Direct wireless reports from your country to several stations in America have given us a valuable check on cable reports. German papers come to us regularly, and are continually and extensively quoted.

Germany has sent special agents to this country to represent her side of every issue. The speeches and writings of these agents have been published repeatedly and at length in almost every paper in our country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. American correspondents in Germany and in the war-zone have told as much as your censors would permit concerning what they saw of Germany and Germany's army. Many Americans have returned from Germany during the war, and have published their experiences and impressions. Some of them have seen your army at work, suffered from its inhumanity, and been subjected to outrages and indignities by the civil officials of your Government. Others were dined and honoured as notable guests and given unusual opportunities for seeing as much as your officials wanted them to see. Both have offered valuable first-hand testimony as to the behaviour of the German nation at war. Your university professors and other prominent citizens of your country have written us circular and private letters without number, presenting Germany's arguments in every conceivable form. Your Ambassador and other officials of your Government have been most active in keeping first-hand information before the American public. Thousands of your reservists, unable to cross the sea in safety, remain in this country to talk and write in behalf of their Fatherland.

In addition to all this, Germany's cause has been most vigorously championed by many Germans and German-Americans long resident in America. Münsterberg and others have published numerous articles and books in Germany's favour. Every possible plea to justify Germany's position has been enthusiastically spread abroad by the German-American press, and with that love of " fair play " which is a widely-recognised characteristic of Americans, even those papers which believe Germany responsible for the war and its worst horrors, have printed volumes of material from pro-German authors in order that the whole truth might be known by a full and free discussion of both sides of every question. I have read many pro-German articles in the *New York Times*, the *New York Sun*, the *Outlook*, and other papers and magazines opposed to German policy—articles by Münsterberg, Kuno Franke, Von Bernstorff, Dernburg, and other staunch defenders of Germany. The columns of our papers are freely open to every authoritative champion of the German cause, no matter what the editorial policy of the papers may be. Never was fuller and freer opportunity for defence accorded to anyone than has been given to the friends of Germany to present in print to the American public every possible justification for Germany's acts. Only the grossest ignorance of the actual facts could ever lead anyone to make the charge in good faith that

the truth about Germany has been concealed from Americans. Your letter did not contain a single statement or argument that has not been printed over and over again in papers from one end of America to the other by various defenders of the German cause. Germany's official documents issued in defence of her position at the beginning of the war, her charges of atrocities against her enemies and her supposed proofs of the falsity of atrocity charges against the Germans, have all been published fully and widely, although you seem not to be aware of this fact.

Still further, in addition to the legitimate publicity in favour of Germany related above, there has been forced upon the American public the most stupendous propaganda which the world has ever witnessed. Millions of dollars have been spent by German agents in a colossal endeavour to shape public opinion. America has been literally deluged with leaflets, pamphlets, books, articles, and advertisements, subsidised by these propagandists. Money has been lavishly spent in every form of appeal which might be expected to turn American sentiment against the Allies and in favour of the Teutons. Contributions have been widely solicited to finance this propaganda, and one of my colleagues in Columbia is among those bearing German names who, in published letters, have refused to support this moneyed campaign, engineered by German agents. Strikes have been organised in our

factories, newspapers have been subsidised, labour orators have been employed to incite trouble, all with gold supplied from Teutonic sources. Ambassador Dumba was forced to leave this country because of the capture of secret letters revealing plots to organise strikes in our munitions factories, to buy up orators to incite workmen to discontent, and to pay newspapers for advancing the German propaganda. For all of this the Austrian Government was to supply the necessary funds. German spies now in our prisons have admitted that they were sent here by high German officials and provided with ample supplies of money to engage in secret plots against our neutrality with the object of stopping munition shipments. German officials in this country have admitted handling millions of dollars in illegal operations carried on in defiance of our laws and in insolent disregard of international diplomatic courtesy. Our courts have convicted and sentenced to 18 months' penal servitude three high German officials of the Hamburg-American Steamship Line for a conspiracy to help German warships in defiance of our laws. These officials admitted spending nearly two million dollars of German gold in this illegal work. Our detectives estimate that German authorities have spent twenty-seven million dollars in America alone to influence us against the Allies, to stir up trouble against us in labour circles, and to foment a revolution in Mexico

to our embarrassment. Our Government asked that the German Military and Naval Attachés be removed from this country because of their insolent violations of our neutrality, by activities in connection with which they handled immense sums of German gold for the propaganda to influence us against England and in favour of Germany.

For every pamphlet, paper, or article sent to me by English, French, Russian, and Italian organisations I get several dozen from German organisations. I get but a few circulars a month from Allied countries. Not a week passes that I do not receive many from German sources. America has been flooded with German propagandist literature; very little ever comes from other countries. Full-page advertisements, paid by German agents, have appeared repeatedly in American papers, urging the merits of Germany's case. I have never seen one on behalf of the Allies. All over New York City, before I left for my summer vacation, were giant posters on the billboards, put there by a pro-German society, urging the people to ask President Wilson to stop the exportation of arms to Germany's enemies. I have never seen one poster of any kind put up by friends of the Allies. Indeed, America has been so deluged with German propaganda and German-paid advertisements, and requests for money to carry on the propaganda in favour of Germany, that the whole

nation has become heartily sick of it, and has urged the Government to expel from the country some of your agents who have been particularly offensive in carrying on such a propaganda among our citizens. German gold, not English gold, has been lavishly used to influence American opinion. Our Government has had to employ a special detective force to discover and destroy the many plots in which German and Austrian gold has been lavishly used to influence opinion and action in America ; and from other neutral countries comes abundant evidence that the same stupendous propaganda, to turn opinion and action in favour of Germany, has been carried on everywhere, with an audacity and utter disregard of cost which has astonished the world. In the face of such facts as these the German outcry against "English gold" has seemed wholly insincere, and little less than ridiculous.

Finally, American opinion has been based more than all else on Germany's official communications, directly addressed to our Government, on certain acts which Germany has admitted, and on the nature of the defence and excuses offered by the German Government in palliation of those acts. You must not forget that the many lengthy notes addressed by your Government to Americans have been published in full in American papers. The outcry against English gold, against cable dispatches altered by the English, and against corrupt newspaper

publishers cannot be raised in connection with diplomatic correspondence transmitted direct to your Ambassador here. This authentic, official correspondence has given us an excellent measure of the standards of morality and humanity which actuate the present German Government. Our opinion of Germany has been profoundly influenced by these official documents.

Germany has committed certain acts which are freely admitted by your Government. A nation, like a man, is judged by its deeds. After all excuses and explanations are made, the deeds remain. Americans have read the excuses and the explanations fully and repeatedly; and with these excuses and explanations in mind have formed an opinion of the power responsible for the deeds. No English gold, no manipulated cable dispatches can have had anything to do with that opinion. The deeds themselves have been the supreme force in shaping American opinion of Germany. Germany has defended the many acts which have brought down upon her the contempt and opprobrium of the entire civilised world. As you well know, one of the best tests of a man's morals is the kind of a defence he offers for his acts. Americans have read most carefully the many defences offered by your Chancellor, your Minister of Foreign Affairs, your Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, your official spokesmen sent to this country, and your Ambassador here; and in the notes

sent officially and directly to our Government by your Government. We have formed an opinion of the moral standards of the Government which makes and approves of such defences.

I believe you must, in sincerity and frankness, admit that the American public has had many sources of information open to it in forming its opinions about Germany. Indeed, with a free press, a large German population absolutely free from censorship or restrictions of any kind, and a Government which does not need to suppress facts for military or political reasons, we are in a far better position to learn the whole truth about Germany than are the German people themselves.

III.

Having outlined some of the many sources of information upon which Americans have relied in forming their opinions of Germany and her actions in this war, I now will state what the American opinion is in regard to some of the vital issues which have been raised. In doing this, I will not endeavour to explain that opinion, to criticise it, nor to defend it. Neither will I give you my personal opinion on the several points, for my own personal opinion is of slight consequence when we are discussing the attitude of an entire nation. If you desire,

I will be glad to tell you, on some other occasion, just how far my own opinions coincide with the collective opinion of the country at large, and just where I differ from that opinion. My object at present is simply to interpret American opinion to you as it exists to-day. When I say "American opinion," I mean, of course, the opinion of the vast majority of our people. A significant proportion of the German-born population and a very small proportion of native Americans (usually those married to Germans or otherwise connected with Germany) disagree with the opinions cited. But over 90 per cent. of our population may safely be said to hold the views described as "American" below.

In the first place, Americans, in general, make a distinction between the German Government and the German people. They realise that certain features of the Prussianised Government have never appealed favourably to the Bavarians, the Saxons, and other elements of the German population. I do not mean by this that Americans believe any part of Germany is disloyal to the Government. On the contrary, they believe the German people as a whole are supporting the Government and its acts with devotion, and that, therefore, the German people as a whole are responsible for whatever acts the Government commits. But Americans recognise the reality of Prussian leadership in the policy of your country. They do not believe the

German people wanted the war; but they do believe the military Government, under Prussian control, wanted the war, planned for it with infinite skill and efficiency for many years, and brought it about when they believed the time was ripe.

Americans have no doubt whatever that the insolent ultimatum to Servia was delivered for the purpose of provoking war, and that Austria would never have dared sent it were it not for the fact that the German Government " assured her a free hand " in advance, as has been officially admitted by your Government. The fact that Austria refused to make public the full evidence on which she based her accusations against the Servian Government, added to the fact that she made these accusations after a secret investigation in which the defendant had no representation, has shocked not only America but the entire world; and has convinced the world, as a whole, that Austria and Germany were more guilty of wrongdoing than was Servia.

Americans have studied carefully the official documents issued by the different Governments concerning the origin of the war, and have had the advantage of seeing all the papers which each has published. The official papers issued by England, Germany, France, Austria, and the other Governments have been printed in full in pamphlet form, and have been eagerly studied

by the whole nation. Edition after edition has been exhausted by a people eagerly seeking to learn the truth. In Germany there has been no such eagerness to learn the truth by careful, critical study of the official sources of information, and leading Germans have regretfully admitted that too many of the German people were content to accept their Government's statements as the truth, without attempting to use their own intelligence in the matter. In the opinion of Americans the official documents, and especially the admissions made by your Government in its attempted defence, prove that the German Government forced the war in order to satisfy the ambitions of the military party which has long been in control. When you have a chance to read certain documents which your Government does not let you read now, you can form an impartial judgment as to whether or not Americans and the other neutral peoples have been unjust in deciding that Germany is responsible for the war. Until that time you will, of course, feel that the judgment of the world does your country a terrible wrong. The Government which caused the war is not going to let its people read things which would shake their confidence, and cause them to weaken in their support of the war!

If Germany really exercised a moderating influence at Vienna, and strove to avert the war, the State papers exchanged between Berlin and

Vienna would clearly prove this, if published. Germany has every reason to publish those papers and prove her sincerity, if she tried to prevent the war. On the other hand, both Germany and Austria have every reason to keep those papers secret if they were jointly planning the war. They have kept the papers secret. Not one word of the vital correspondence between the two Teutonic capitals has ever been made public. Even your own people are entirely ignorant as to what exchanges really took place in the critical days preceding the declarations of war. You only know, and the world only knows, that Germany made the vague general assertion that she was "exercising a moderating influence at Vienna." You can hardly expect the world to believe such a vague generality when the documents which would prove its truth or falsity are carefully suppressed. Why are they suppressed? Americans, in common with the rest of the world, are convinced that your Government does not dare publish them because it would prove the guilt of Germany more conclusively than do the admissions contained in papers already made public.

It is the practically universal opinion, not only in America, but in other neutral countries as well, that the repeated excuses and shifty evasions by which Berlin rejected every plan for mediation, arbitration, or any other programme which would tend toward a peaceful solution of

the crisis, combined with Berlin's acknowledgment that " a free hand was assured " to Austria, and the further fact that all correspondence between Berlin and Vienna is carefully suppressed, are amply sufficient to convince any fair-minded, unprejudiced man that the Berlin Government is primarily responsible for the war. The fact that Germany has for years published a voluminous war literature, has taught her people to think and live in terms of war, and was fully prepared with enormous reserves of materials when war came; whereas the Allied countries were notoriously unprepared and in no condition to ward off the first blows of a surprise attack, to say nothing of fighting an offensive campaign, is generally considered enough to create a strong presumption that Germany and not the Allies wanted war. The official correspondence of the *ante-bellum* days is full of suggestions for arbitration, mediation, and other plans to preserve the peace, coming from the Allied countries. Americans have searched in vain for a single plan for a peaceful solution coming from Germany. On the contrary, your own version of the negotiations shows only a persistent rejection by Berlin of every peace plan, and a dogged determination to support Vienna in her assault on Servia—an assault which, following the robbery of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria under Germany's protection, could not be endured by a civilised world, and was, therefore, certain to cause war.

When Servia, urged by the Allies to yield as much as possible in order to prevent war, acceded to eight out of ten of Austria's humiliating demands and agreed to arbitrate the two involving her national sovereignty, the world saw that the Allied countries did not want war, and were willing to suffer great humiliation for the sake of preventing it. Americans do not consider that any fair-minded man possessed of ordinary commonsense can honestly believe that nations seeking to provoke war with Germany would have urged their *protégé* to make a humiliating surrender to insolent and unjust demands. If there were any truth in the assertion that the Allies were trying to force war on Germany, they would have advised Servia to resist, not to yield. When Austria, backed by Germany, declared war on Servia, despite Servia's abject and complete surrender on eight points and willingness to arbitrate the other two, there no longer existed outside of Germany and Austria the slightest doubt that Germany was forcing the war to achieve the aggrandisement which has been taught for years in your country as the natural destiny of Germany.

Germany's guilt in forcing the war is recognised not only by Americans and other neutral peoples, but by hundreds of thousands of Germans who live in neutral countries and thus have a chance to learn more of the truth than is possible in the belligerent countries.

Germans who were in Germany when the war broke out, but who have since come to America, have told me personally that, after learning the whole truth, they can no longer doubt Germany's responsibility for the catastrophe. Germans who have left here to go back and fight for the Fatherland admitted to me in private conversation that they knew Germany forced the war, and that the Kaiser and the Prussian military party were alone to blame. I know Germans who are liberally supporting the Allied cause because they believe the defeat of Prussianism is essential to a civilised Germany. Even your rigid censorship has not prevented our receipt of occasional letters from Germans, in which they admit the uncertainty of Germany's claim that the Allies forced the war. A considerable element of independent thinkers in Germany have had the wisdom to realise the perfectly obvious truth that no Government is willing to admit responsibility for the war, and that therefore your Government's assertion that it did not start the present conflagration can carry no weight until the whole truth is revealed to the German people, and they are thus given the opportunity to form an intelligent judgment, like men, instead of being forced to believe mere assertions and partial evidence, like children. To-day you believe in the innocence of the Prussian military power; but few people in the rest of the world doubt its guilt. To-

morrow, when the war is over, and you can get an outside view of the whole question, you will have the chance to form an intelligent judgment as to what nation History will for ever record as the one guilty of this fearful crime against humanity.

The violation of Belgian neutrality shocked Americans as it did the rest of the civilised world, and turned the tide of sentiment against Germany more strongly than ever. Americans are practically unanimous in regarding the belated excuses of your Government, to the effect that Belgian neutrality was already violated by the Allies, as mere clumsy subterfuges, trumped up to stem the terrible tide of universal condemnation heaped upon Germany for this crime against an innocent people. Nothing that any German can ever say or write will efface from the memory of the world the uncontrovertible fact that your Chancellor officially admitted your country's guilt in this matter. "The wrong—I speak openly, gentlemen—the wrong we have done Belgium will be righted when our military ends are accomplished." In these words your Chancellor blundered out a truth which has for ever silenced all your apologists for the crime. American opinion considers it discreditable and futile to invent charges against French soldiers on Belgian soil and French aviators flying over Belgian territory; and to try to make out a case in defence of Germany

on the basis of documents discovered in Belgium —when your Chancellor has officially admitted Germany's guilt. Americans have no doubt that on the basis of the well-known facts of the case, supplemented by your Chancellor's admission of guilt, History will for ever record Germany's brutal disregard of her treaty obligations and her murderous assault on a small, innocent nation as one of the most terrible crimes ever committed by a nation claiming to rank high among civilised peoples.

The plea that "military necessity" justified the destruction of an innocent people, that the invasion of Belgium was necessary as a measure of "self-defence," Americans consider as striking proof of the essential barbarity of the German Government. A man who would shoot down an innocent girl in order to get at another man would be condemned as the worst kind of a brute. A Government which slaughters an innocent and peaceful people in order to get at an enemy Government is universally regarded by Americans as the worst type of a barbarous Government. No truly civilised Government could be so brutally selfish as to protect itself by inflicting the horrors of fearful war upon a helpless and unoffending people.

You dismiss the question of atrocities by asking if Americans can believe that such

Germans as I know would commit such awful deeds. The reply to this is that, while Americans realise that there are many Germans who would rather die than do a cruel act, Germany possesses a military Government which has convinced Americans and the rest of the world that, under the plea of "military necessity," it will commit the most barbarous crimes. History demonstrates that a military Government stifles the finer instincts of the people which support it. Many Germans struggled to overthrow the military clique in Germany, and some of them are among the most gentle-hearted, kindly souls it has ever been my good fortune to meet. Others have exalted the military and the idea of war; and while boarding in the home of a German army officer I witnessed heartless and cruel acts which I do not believe could have occurred in any other civilised country among people of the same education and intelligence. Unfortunately, Americans see no opportunity to doubt the barbarous behaviour of the German army; and in the debate over the Zabern affair some of your best citizens rebelled against military brutality—but the punishment meted out to the military offenders was nullified by your military Government. In the present war that same Government has admitted and justified unspeakable atrocities under the plea of "military necessities." Americans do not

believe every lie wafted on the wings of gossip; but when your book of instructions to army officers expressly breaks down every safeguard for civilised warfare by justifying "exceptions" to the rules governing such warfare, Americans cannot fail to conclude that your Government is more barbarous than that of any other country claiming to be civilised; for other countries do not now recognise the right of armies to make such exceptions. Your Government, in trying to defend itself against the storm of world-criticism, has admitted and justified the slaughter of innocent hostages as a "military necessity." No other civilised country does this; and Americans consider the German Government both brutal and barbarous for permitting this utterly inhuman practice. American soldiers in Vera Cruz were killed by francstireurs; but our Government would hang any American officer who permitted the murder of innocent hostages on that account. Your Government justifies and excuses such measures; therefore Americans have been forced to conclude that your Government is less civilised than are the Governments of America, England, and France, which forbid such conduct.

Your Government executed a woman of noble character, and defends its act as perfectly legal and a "military necessity." Americans are quite willing to admit that Miss Cavell may have been guilty of the charges brought against

her. Yet the entire world stood horrified when the Government of Germany, with due legal form, committed a crime against womanhood and against humanity, which for centuries will make Germans blush for shame when the name of Miss Cavell is mentioned. Englishmen blush at the memory of Jeffreys, but no Englishman ever defends that fiendish butcher of women. Americans blush at the memory of Mrs. Surratt ; but few Americans will defend her execution. The fact that Germans have risen to defend the Cavell atrocity led many Americans to conclude that the brutalising influence of militarism has made the mass of the German people less humane than are the peoples of other countries, since they defend what other peoples condemn.

Your Government has bombarded unfortified seacoast towns which Americans know from personal observation, both before the war and during the bombardment, were not defended in any way. Mothers and babies were blown to shreds, but no military damage was done in most cases. Dozens of helpless old men, women and children were killed for every soldier slain. The same is true of your Zeppelin raids. Americans believe these acts are committed for the purpose of stirring up enthusiasm among the German populace. They believe such acts are in defiance of the rules of civilised warfare, that they are utterly inhuman and barbarous,

and that a nation which approves and applauds such senseless slaughter is less civilised than other modern nations. The British Government has steadfastly refused to accede to the clamour of a few of its citizens who urge a policy of wholesale reprisals against German open towns. Americans honour this respect for the rules of civilised warfare and regret that even occasionally France has yielded to the provocation for reprisal raids against such a place as Freiburg. The fact that Germany began the slaughter of babies and women in defiance of the rules of war, and has kept it up in frequent raids by warships, Zeppelins, and aeroplanes, whereas the Allies have very seldom attacked open towns, and then only as occasional reprisals following peculiarly barbarous German attacks, has won for Germany the condemnation, and for the Allies the commendation of the civilised world.

The *Lusitania* atrocity removed from the minds of the American people the last possible doubt as to the essential barbarity of the German Government. No other Government pretending to be civilised has ever shocked the entire world by such a sickening crime against humanity. It is utterly inconceivable that the American nation could descend so low in the scale of humanity as to order the deliberate destruction of an English ship bearing hundreds of innocent German women and children across

the seas. But if such a thing were conceivable, you could not find in the American navy an officer who would obey the inhuman order. Nor do Americans believe that the English or French Governments could ever disgrace their countries' honour by such a barbarous act. I am shocked and surprised that a man of your position and intelligence can find it in his heart to defend an act which has for ever stained the fair name and honour of your country.

I read with amazement your assertions that the *Lusitania* was armed, that she carried ammunition in defiance of American laws, and that our official inspection of her was careless. Your own Government has itself abandoned the false charge that the *Lusitania* carried guns, and no longer makes such a ridiculous claim; while the German reservist who pretended to have seen the gun has admitted that he lied and is now serving a term in prison for perjury. You are not familiar with American shipping-laws which expressly permit the carrying of certain types of ammunition on passenger vessels, and you are, of course, quite ignorant as to what inspection of the vessel was made in New York, for you were in Germany at the time. Your assertions were made wholly on the basis of the false statements furnished you in Government-controlled papers. You had no means of determining the truth or falsity of the statements, on the basis of reliable and impartial

evidence; yet you did not hesitate to make assertions which your own Government now practically admits were not well founded. The fact that the learned men of Germany have throughout the war violently supported the German position by reckless charges and wild assertions, paying no regard to the necessity of basing such charges and assertions on impartial evidence, instead of accepting with child-like simplicity the unsupported statements of the German Government, has destroyed the confidence of Americans in the ability of the German educated men to think and reason fairly and honestly about the war.

The manifestos of the German professors, issued to Americans, did much to alienate American sympathy from Germany; for the bitterness and unreasoning fury of the documents, combined with the entire absence of evidence to support the many reckless statements made in them, did much to convince Americans that the German position was not capable of honest, logical, dispassionate, manly defence. There has never at any time been any such outbreak of fury and bitterness among the English or French people. While there are individual exceptions, taken as a whole the press, pamphlets, and private letters of the English and French, dealing with the war, have from the first been characterised by a self-control and calm determination, which in the

case of the French has especially astonished Americans; for we expected the French to be more excitable. Taken as a whole, the Teutonic literature has from the first been characterised by an uncontrollable bitterness and violent denunciation of the enemy and of neutrals; which has also surprised Americans, for we expected you to be more logical and self-contained than the French, instead of less so.

Americans believe that the German people are a great people, capable of great and good things. They honour and admire the Germany which finds her best expression in the literature, music, and science which has justly made you famous. But they distrust and abhor the German Government which has made the name of Germany infamous. The heroic bravery of the German soldiers dying for their Fatherland, and the heroic fortitude of the German women who bear and suffer—all fail to evoke any enthusiasm in this country, or in other neutral countries, because of the stain which the German military Government has put upon their sacrifices. Your greatest victories bring no world honour to your armies because of the cloud of dishonour which hangs over every achievement of the German military machine. There is no enthusiasm, and very little praise, for the captors of Warsaw and Vilna, for Americans remember that it was German soldiers who murdered innocent hostages from "military necessity."

who destroyed much of Louvain from " military necessity," who violated every rule of civilised warfare and humanity in Belgium from " military necessity," who executed a noble English nurse from " military necessity," who wrecked priceless monuments of civilisation in France from " military necessity," who have dropped bombs from the sky in the darkness upon sleeping women and children in unfortified places, and slaughtered hundreds of innocent non-combatants from " military necessity," who sent babes at the breast and their innocent mothers shrieking and strangling to a watery grave in mid-ocean from " military necessity," and who have defended every barbarous act, every crime against humanity on the specious and selfish plea that it was justified by " military necessity." Your Government has robbed your soldiers of all honour in the eyes of the world by making them the instruments of a military policy which the rest of the world unanimously condemns as brutal and barbarous.

It seems to thoughtful Americans who know Germany and Germans best, that the highest duty of intelligent German professors like yourself is not to attempt the hopeless task of converting the rest of the world to an approval of the methods of the German Government, but rather to use your whole influence to establish a German Government which shall have a decent respect for the opinions of the rest of the

world, and shall restore Germany to the place it used to have among civilised nations. Your greatest enemy is not the Russian, nor the French, nor the British Government. They might defeat you in war, but they never could take away your honour. Your greatest enemy is the Government which has dragged the fair name of Germany in the mire of dishonour, shocking the moral instincts of the whole world by acts no other civilised country would think of committing. Your greatest enemy is the Government which stifles your individual development by making you the obedient tools of the "State," which smothers your free thought by a muzzled press under police control, which makes your learned men ridiculous in the eyes of the world by training them to blind, unthinking support of the Government and credulous belief in whatever falsehoods it chooses to impose upon you for military and political purposes, which hurls you into a disastrous war without your knowledge or consent, and which brings down upon you the contempt of the whole world for crimes you would not yourselves commit, but which you must forsooth defend "for the good of the State."

Americans believe that a Government which provokes a war and deceives its people to secure their support, should be destroyed; that a Government which breaks its treaties and murders an innocent neutral nation, should be

destroyed; that a Government which slaughters innocent hostages to prevent sniping by those whose homes are violently attacked, should be destroyed; that a Government which systematically and repeatedly bombards unfortified towns and villages, killing hundreds of innocent women and children, should be destroyed; that a Government which torpedoes unarmed passenger ships, drowning helpless men, women, and children by the thousand in shameful defiance of law and every instinct of humanity, should be destroyed; that a Government which in cold blood executes a woman nurse like Miss Cavell should be destroyed; that a Government which ruthlessly destroys works of art and monuments of civilisation and levies crushing indemnities on captured cities, in defiance of the well-established laws of war, should be destroyed. In the opinion of Americans, a Government which did any one of these things would not be fit to exist in a civilised world. A Government which has done all of them and much more that is equally barbarous and brutal, must, in the opinion of the American people, be utterly destroyed.

Americans hoped for many long years that the German people would themselves throw off the incubus of the military Government which was crushing out their individuality and making their country an object of distrust and fear to all those interested in the progress of civilisa-

tion ; but if you will not rid yourselves of the monster which has dishonoured and disgraced you before the world, then, in American opinion, the safety of the world and the future of Germany require that the present German Government shall be destroyed through military defeat. For this reason the American people are praying earnestly for Allied victory. While there is a sincere effort to maintain the technical neutrality enjoined by the President, there is no neutrality possible on the moral issues involved. Americans may not violate the neutrality of the nation by giving concerted military support to the Allies ; but they are practically unanimous in giving their whole moral support to the nations engaged in the necessary task of destroying the monstrosity of Prussian militarism. Every aid which they can render the Allies without violating national neutrality is being given, not because they do not admire the German people, but because the destruction of the present German Government is regarded as the essential first step in enabling the German people to return to the place of honour they once held in the world. Americans would regard ultimate German victory as an intolerable disaster to civilisation ; and they will never be satisfied until the German armies are decisively defeated. They believe that the ultimate defeat of Germany is assured, and that the least suffering will result to the German people if they will

themselves repudiate the Government which brought upon them their present sufferings, and will start anew with a modern Government responsible to the will of the people.

Sincerely yours,

DOUGLAS W. JOHNSON.

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